

# Populist Communication

In the Context of the European Parliament Elections 2014

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## Research question

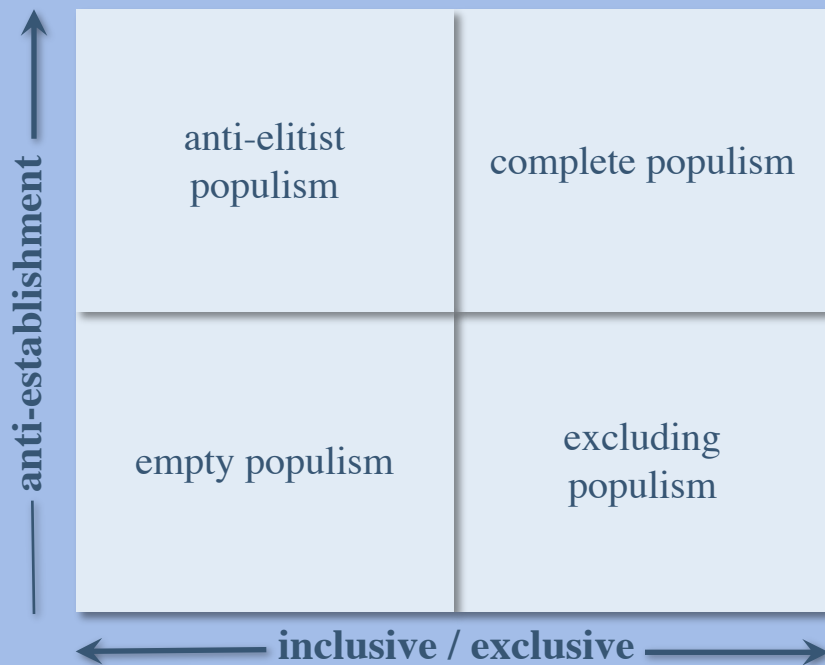
- > What different types of populist communication styles emerge during the EP election campaign 2014
  - and under which conditions are populist communication styles selected by political parties?

# Definition

## *Populism*

- > “Populism is conceived of as *a political style* essentially displaying proximity of the people, while at the same time taking an anti-establishment stance and stressing the (ideal) homogeneity of the people by excluding specific population segments”

(Jagers & Walgrave 2007: 319)



- > 3 components:
- alleged proximity to and identification with the population  
*appeal to the people, homogeneity*
  - criticism of and distrust in the (political) elites  
*elite-critique*
  - ostracism of ,the others‘  
*exclusion*

# Types of populism

*Jagers & Walgrave (2007)*

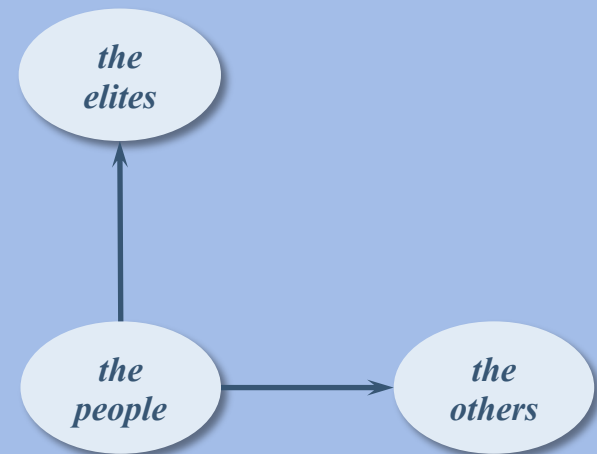
<b><i>Thin populism:</i></b>	(1) people reference	empty
<i>“Medium 1” populism:</i>	(1) people reference and (2) elite critique	anti-elitist
<i>“Medium 2” populism:</i>	(1) people reference and (3) exclusion	excluding
<b><i>Thick populism:</i></b>	(1) people reference and (2) elite critique and (3) exclusion	complete

- > All constitutive traits of populism are considered as features of a political style rather than being bound to a distinct ideology (Jagers & Walgrave 2007)
- > Populism is conceived as the property of a message rather than the property of the actor sending the message (Roodujin et al. 2012).

# Theory

## *Populism and Euroscepticism*

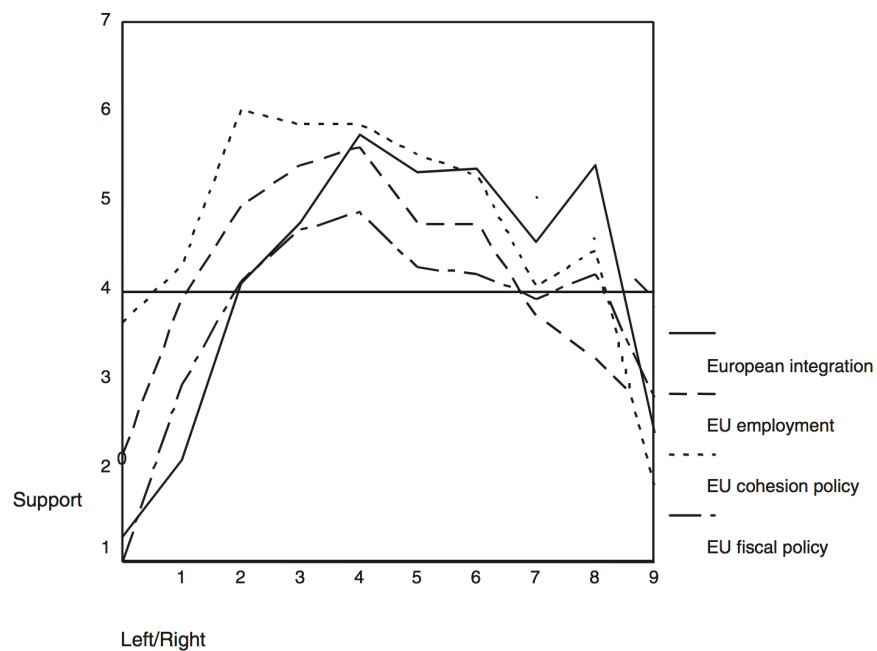
- > *general assumption*: Euroscepticism provides a particularly favourable environment for populism
- > process of (European) integration:
  - allocation of competences
  - enlargement, membership
- > activated issues within Es. discourse:
  - democratic deficit of the EU
  - distance EU elite – citizens; bureaucracy of EU institutions
  - EU accession negotiations, free movement of persons
- > Harmsen (2010): Euroscepticism is not a subset of populism



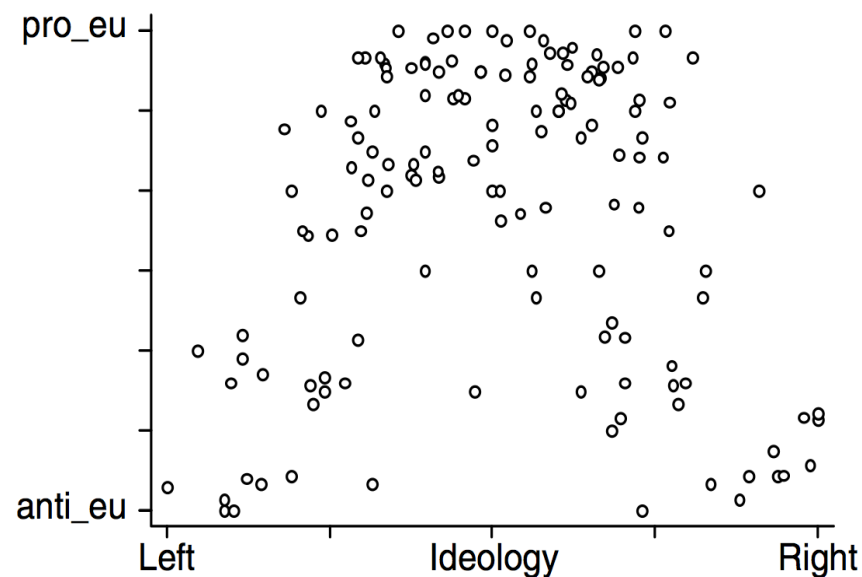
# Theory

## *The inverted U-curve*

Positioning on selected EU Policies, by Left/Right dimension, all parties in 1999 (N = 125)  
Source: Hooghe et al. (2002)



Left-right ideology and EU position in 1999 (EU 15)  
Source: Ray (2007)



## Assumption

- > H0: Parties settled either on the right or left pole of the traditional political spectrum use more populist communication styles than mainstream parties.

# Procedure

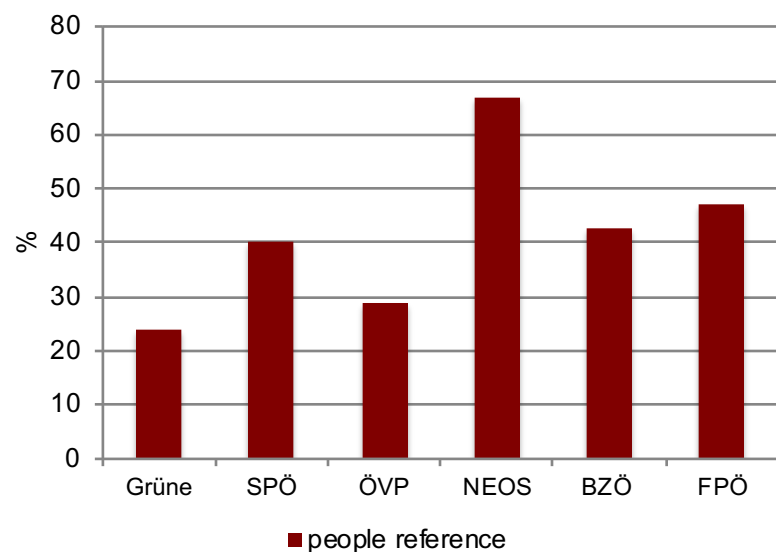
- > Germany & Austria
- > quantitative content analysis of press releases
  - all political parties that reached more than 3% in the last national or European elections (and are running again for EP elections 2014)
  - Europ\* europ\* EU (2x)
  - 8 weeks prior to the EP elections 2014



# Results

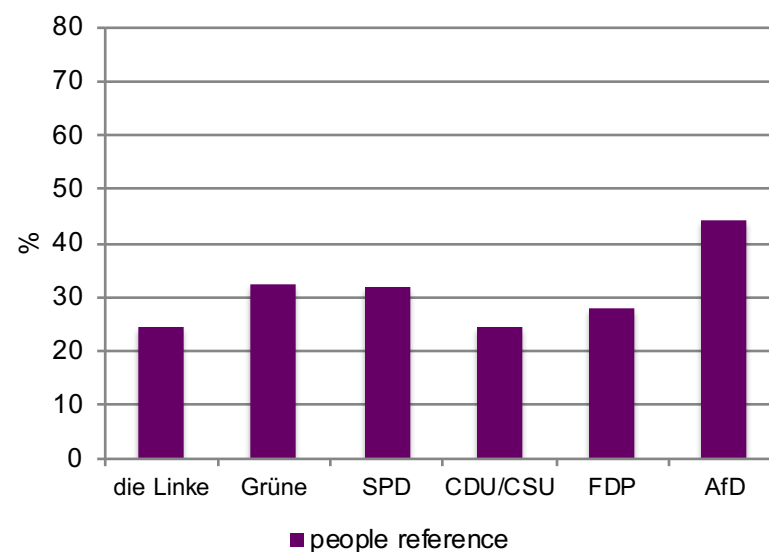
## Percentage of 'people reference' in a PR per party

Austria



$\chi^2(5, N=689) = 21.88; p < 0.001$   
Cramér's V: 0.18

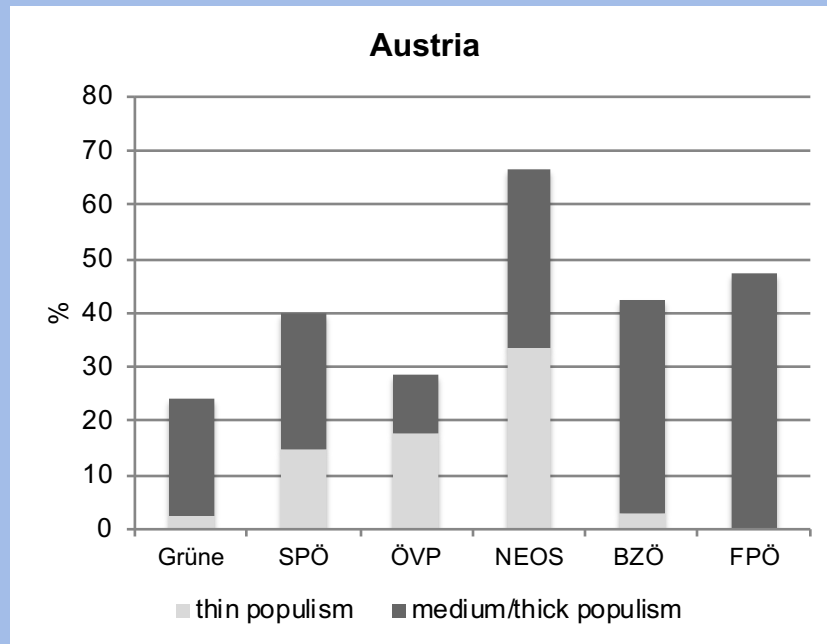
Germany



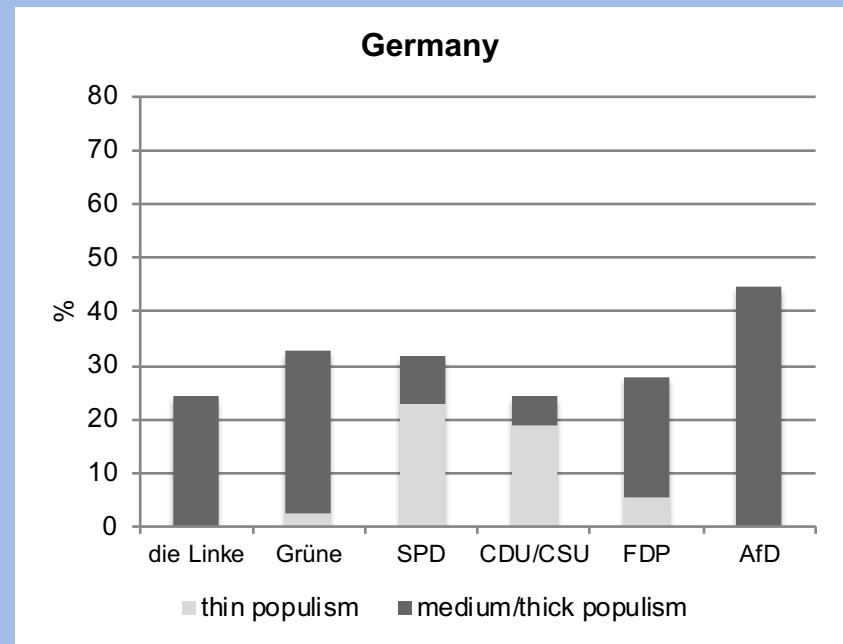
$\chi^2(5, N=213) = 3.13; p$  not significant  
Cramér's V: 0.12

# Results

## Percentage of 'people reference' in a PR per party



$\chi^2(10, N=689) = 80.65; p < 0.001$   
Cramér's V: 0.24



$\chi^2(10, N=212) = 35.85; p < 0.001$   
Cramér's V: 0.29

# Theory

## *Forms of Euroscepticism*

	Eurosceptic <b>Left</b>		Eurosceptic <b>Right</b>
<i>political dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>political critique of the EU's democratic deficit</b></li> <li>• criticism is directed to political elites</li> </ul>	<i>political dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>rejection of further political integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ driven by the established political class</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>criticism is directed to EU politicians</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ social &amp; political corruption, bureaucracy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>economic dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>socio-economic criticism of the EU's neo-liberalism</b></li> <li>• criticism is directed to economic elites</li> </ul>	<i>cultural dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opposition to           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ (more) <b>immigration</b></li> <li>➢ <b>free movement of persons</b></li> <li>➢ prospective <b>enlargement to the East</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>demand for stricter European border controls</b></li> </ul>

(e.g. Bartolini 2005; Heine 2010; Hooghe et al. 2002; Reungoat 2010; Scharpf 1996, 1999)

(e.g. Betz 1994; Börzel & Risse 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kitschelt 1995; Risse-Kappen 1996; Taggart 1998)

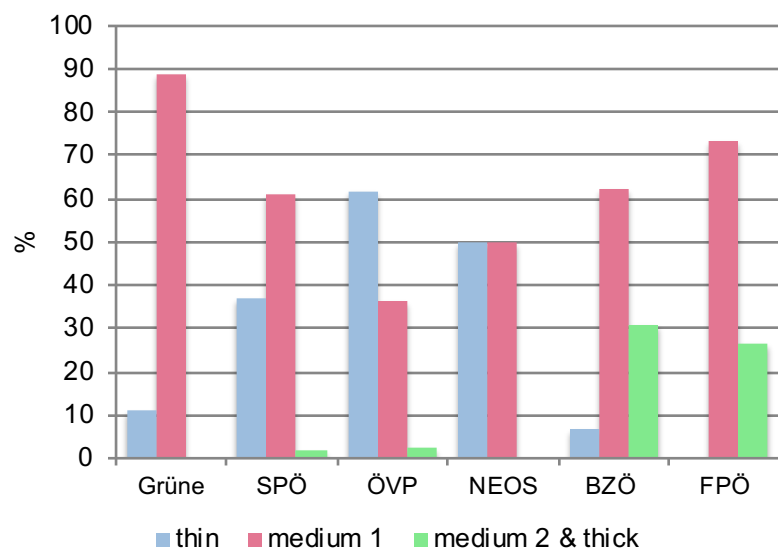
# Assumptions

- > H1a: In the populist communication of **left-wing eurosceptic** parties the element of *,exclusion'* is neglected and a *,medium 1'* (or *,thin'*) type of populism is predominant.
- > H1b: In the populist communication of **right-wing eurosceptic** parties the element of *,exclusion'* is overbalanced and they are therefore applying a *,medium 2'* or a *,thick'* type of populism.

# Results

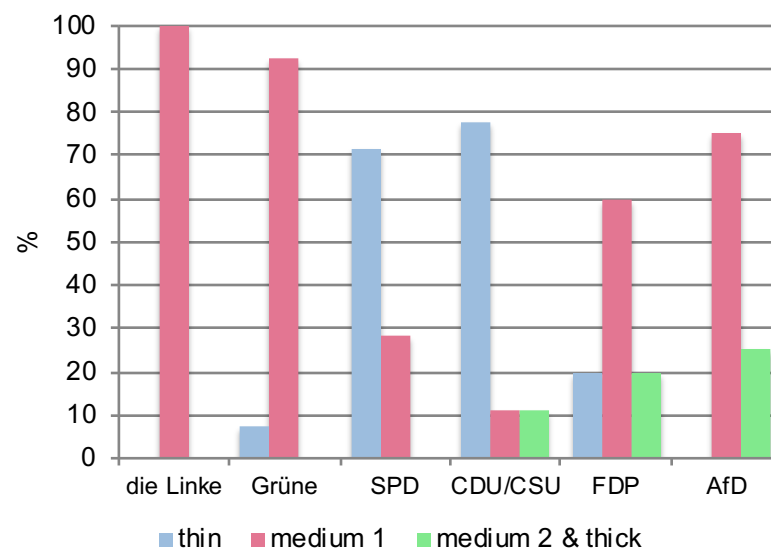
## quantity of populism type per party

**Austria**



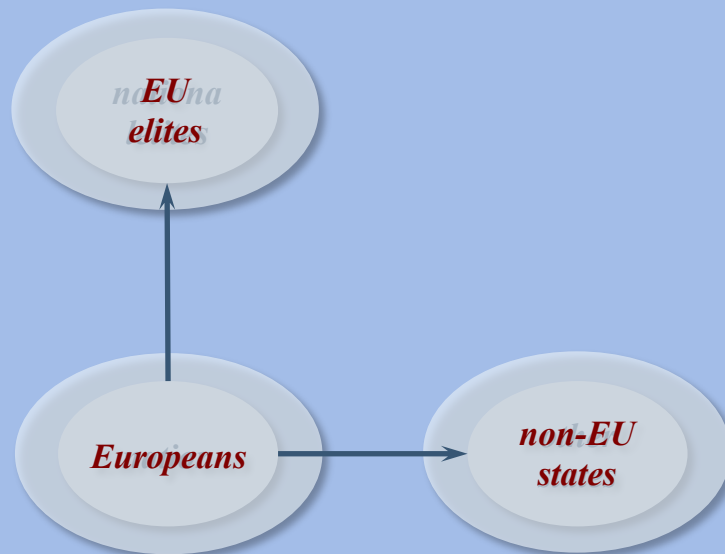
$\chi^2(10, N=260) = 88.89; p < 0.001$   
 Cramér's V: 0.41

**Germany**



$\chi^2(10, N=64) = 41.17; p < 0.001$   
 Cramér's V: 0.57

- > transnational nature of the EU
- > multi-level governance
- > horizontal dimension: *question of identity*



- > What identity perception do the political parties represent?
- > How does this identity perception influence populist party communication?

# Theory

## *Identity*

### Q03: Do you see yourself as...

Land	(NATIONALITY) only	(NATIONALITY) and European	European and (NATIONALITY)	European only	Total ‚European‘
AT	<b>33%</b>	55%	8%	2%	<b>65%</b>
DE	<b>27%</b>	59%	10%	2%	<b>71%</b>

Source: Standard- Eurobarometer 81 –  
European Citizenship – Spring 2014

**exclusive  
national  
identity**

right-wing Eurosceptics

**inclusive  
European  
identity**

mainstream parties

left-wing Eurosceptics:  
„pro-European communitarian“  
(Heine 2010)

# Assumptions

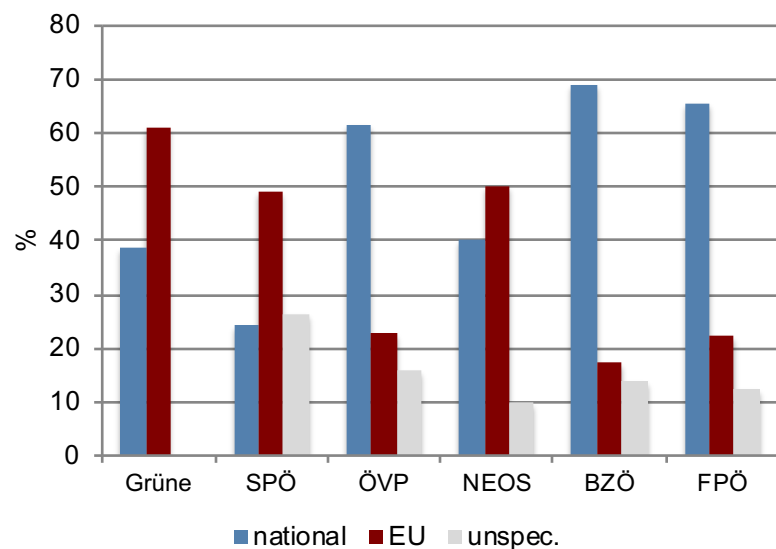
- > H2a: **Eurosceptic** parties from the **right** address their people reference to their own nation.
- > H2b: **Mainstream parties** and **Eurosceptic** parties from the **left** rather appeal to the citizens of the EU.



# Results

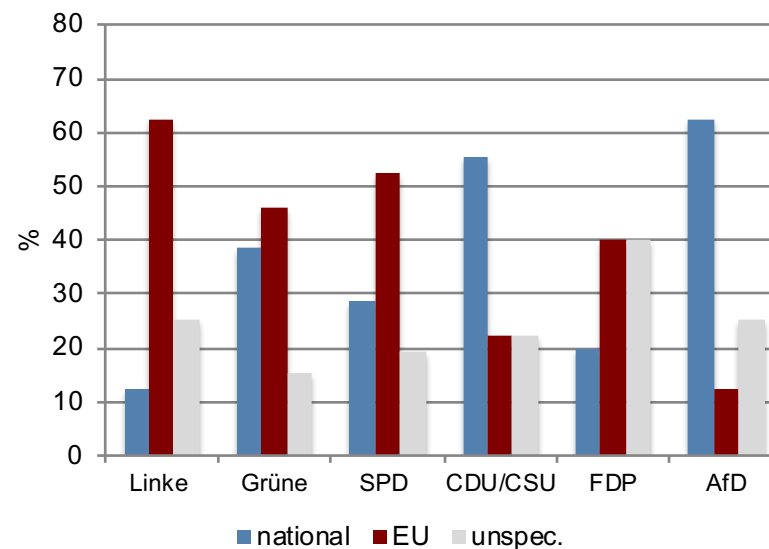
## direction of 'people reference' per party

**Austria**



$\chi^2(10, N=260) = 46.32; p < 0.001$   
 Cramér's V: 0.30

**Germany**



$\chi^2(10, N=64) = 9.48; p$  not significant  
 Cramér's V: 0.27

# Conclusion

- > Eurosceptic fringe parties do not use populist communication more often than mainstream parties, but there is a tendency to use more medium or thick populism than mainstream parties
- > Left-wing parties:  
**anti-elitist populism** & thin populism
- > Right-wing parties:  
**anti-elitist populism** & **excluding populism**
- > Parties that represent an inclusive European identity are more often appealing to the **community of Europeans** than to the people of the national state
  - (exceptions: ÖVP, CDU/CSU)
- > Parties that represent an exclusive national identity are more often appealing to the **people of the national state** than to the people of Europe.

**Thank you!**